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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 7907
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1948
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1478
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 3864
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5116
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 4369
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005717

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: PPP SPOKESMAN ON ELECTIONS, ROYAL HEALTH, NEW ARMY
COMMANDER

REF: BANGKOK 5696 (AMBASSADOR'S LUNCH WITH ANUPONG)

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Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) The King's sister remains in the hospital, and a political ally of deposed Prime Minister Thaksin told us she is brain-dead, despite public announcements to the contrary. The political party loyal to Thaksin revised its draft party list in response to an alleged plan by unnamed figures to use the eventual announcement of the King's sister's death in order to postpone elections. The extreme anti-Thaksin forces have tried to use every tool possible to delay the elections, so the concerns of Thaksin's camp cannot be dismissed out of hand. Ultimately, however, we are skeptical that the death of the Princess alone would derail the elections. Our contact assessed Army Commander Anupong Paojinda as unlikely to instigate plots to delay elections, but he believed Anupong had not yet been able to consolidate his control over the military. We continue to believe the elections will take place as scheduled, even if the Princess dies before then.
End Summary.

KING'S SISTER STILL HOSPITALIZED

2. (U) The Royal Household Bureau announced on November 6 that the condition of the King's sister, Princess Galyani Vadhana, who suffers from cancer and has been hospitalized, has improved. The statement said she had recovered from a fever and was more alert.

DEATH MAY BE MANIPULATED TO AFFECT ELECTION

3. (C) In a meeting with us on November 7, political activist Jakrapob Penkair said he had heard reports that Princess Galyani was already brain-dead and dependent on a respirator.

(Note: Jakrapob is closely aligned with politicians loyal to deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. People's Power Party (PPP) Deputy Leader Yongyuth Tiypairath, who maintains close ties to Thaksin, referred Jakrapob to us as a reliable spokesman for PPP. End Note.) Jakrapob said top officials in PPP had heard these reports from sources they considered reliable; they further believed that news of Galyani's death would be suppressed until after December 5, the King's 80th birthday. On or about December 10, according to Jakrapob's sources, the news of Galyani's death would be released, and a period of mourning would begin.

14. (C) Jakrapob said he and other top officials of PPP had heard that influential anti-Thaksin figures would use Galyani's death as a pretext to delay the December 23 election for a period of one year. It would be virtually impossible for anyone to publicly protest a postponement portrayed as a show of respect for the monarchy. Jakrapob said that, if this were to take place, PPP planned not to protest the delay, but, after a period of weeks, people from PPP circles would begin raising publicly the need for a return to elected government. Jakrapob said that PPP considered the scenario of an election delay based on Galyani's death sufficiently credible that party officials held an all-night meeting on the night of November 6 to revise the party list for the coming election, and to ensure that certain figures who might be needed for unofficial agitation would maintain a certain distance from the party. PPP continued to plan for the election on the assumption that it would take place, however.

15. (C) Jakrapob noted that pressure from certain circles to delay the election had made strange bedfellows of PPP and Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, who shared PPP's desire for elections as soon as possible. Citing efforts by the King to ensure the prompt issuance of the Royal Decree that had set

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the December 23 election date, Jakrapob felt that the King would favor maintaining the current election schedule, even in the event of Galyani's death. Jakrapob assessed that the King would not want Thais who want a fast return to democracy to feel as though they had to choose between elections and mourning Galyani's death. Jakrapob believed that Queen Sirikit, however, was more concerned than the King about the possibility that elections would restore political power to those allied with Thaksin. Jakrapob noted that, even if the elections were not delayed, Galyani's death might prompt other measures that could affect PPP -- for example, the Election Commission might announce more restrictive regulations pertaining to party activities during a period of mourning.

VIEW OF ARMY COMMANDER

16. (C) Jakrapob expressed concern that the military would use a postponement of elections to continue its domination of Thai politics. We asked Jakrapob's assessment of Army commander Anupong Paojinda, remarking that people in PPP/Thai Rak Thai circles typically told us they viewed Anupong positively, despite his involvement in the 2006 coup d'etat. Jakrapob said that, prior to the coup, he had been present when then-PM Thaksin had asked Anupong if Anupong would launch a coup against him. Anupong replied, "Absolutely not -- unless ordered to by the sky (read: King or Queen)." Jakrapob said that Anupong had stayed true to his word and only reluctantly participated in the coup after Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda informed him that the King and/or Queen supported the coup. Jakrapob characterized Anupong as someone who still "can talk to Thaksin," but he also noted that Anupong had not yet been able to install senior military officials who were loyal to him.

COMMENT

17. (S/NF) Extreme anti-Thaksin forces inside the interim legislature and in political circles have used every trick to try to delay the elections, so the concerns expressed by Jakrapob are not unreasonable. However, these efforts have been unsuccessful so far, and we are skeptical that they would work this time, especially if the King and interim PM continue their support for the elections. Jakrapob's account of Galyani's condition tracks with other indications we have seen, and we expect more concerned gossip about this as the word spreads; in absense of honest news about the real situation inside the palace, rumor will flourish.
BOYCE